

15TH DISTRICT SESSION REPORT



REP. BARB LISK



**REP.
BRUCE CHANDLER**

February 2001

Dear Friends,

Voters made history once again by electing an evenly divided House of Representatives, made up of 49 Republicans and 49 Democrats. With so much at stake this year, it's critical that we turn our attention to the needs of the people of Washington state. The 2001 session will require cooperation and negotiation.

The biggest issue looming is the two-year operating budget, which is already showing a substantial deficit. The cost of simply continuing current services combined with the cost of the mandated pay-raise and education initiatives approved by voters in November will exceed our available revenues by several hundred million dollars. We will be challenged to find significant cost reductions without diminishing important services.

We also hope to continue making progress on important watershed management efforts. We want a planning process that will ensure an abundant source of clean water while maintaining a sound economic base in the Yakima and Klickitat valleys.

As always, we welcome your calls and letters. The 2001 session promises to be a very important and very challenging one, and we look forward to hearing your ideas and concerns. Thank you for the honor of representing you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barb Lisk".

Barb Lisk
State Representative

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce Chandler".

Bruce Chandler
State Representative

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Appropriations, *Vice Chair*
Commerce and Labor
Rules

Committee Assignments:
Commerce and Labor, *Vice Chair*
Agriculture and Ecology
Technology Telecommunications
and Energy

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STATE BUDGET FACING SIGNIFICANT DEFICIT LAWMAKERS ASKED TO DO MORE WITH LESS

Washington voters have set out some challenging parameters for lawmakers who will be writing a two-year operating budget this year. Voters have adopted significant tax reductions while at the same time approving major new spending initiatives. Clearly, taxpayers are directing the Legislature to be more efficient with their tax dollars.

The cost of continuing current policies combined with the new spending mandates approved by voters exceeds the amount of money the state has by \$768 million. More importantly, these obligations exceed the legal spending limit (also mandated by voters) by approximately \$1.2 billion.

It is incumbent on us to find responsible spending reductions without harming essential services. We have a deep concern particularly for local government and local services such as rural hospitals and public safety. We will be working to ensure that these local community resources are not severely affected.

Our overriding concern, of course, is for the taxpayers, who have made it clear that government must use their money wisely.



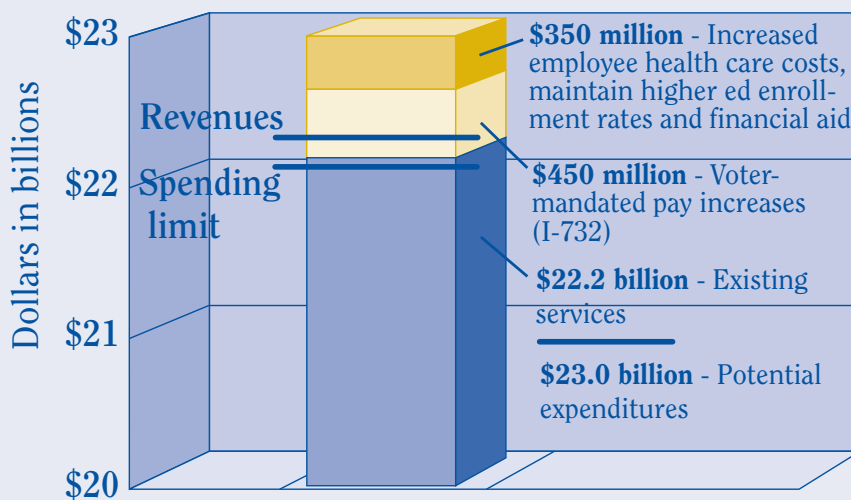
Rep. Barb Lisk addresses her colleagues on the floor of the House.

TRANSPORTATION - MOVING PEOPLE AND PRODUCTS

Many of our agriculture-based jobs and businesses rely on our network of rural roads and bridges, and the ability to keep them in good condition so that load restrictions are not necessary. We may not see gridlock on the roads of Central Washington, but we do know what it is like to live in an area with an economy that depends on moving products from farm to market and people from their homes to the doctor or the grocery store.

Our goal this session will be the development of a long-term plan that we can take to the people and say, "this will preserve our roads and make them safer, strengthen our economy, and get us home to our families sooner at the end of each day."

2001 - 03 OPERATING BUDGET OUTLOOK



It is against this backdrop that we must develop and agree on a budget that is sustainable and prudent, while maintaining essential services and respecting all of the initiatives approved by the people – whether they increase spending (I-728, I-732) or limit spending (I-601, I-695). While the budget has some challenges, there's no reason why we shouldn't have an agreement before the end of the regular session in April.

BALANCE NEEDED IN WATER, NATURAL RESOURCE POLICIES

With an evenly divided Legislature, it's unclear how much progress we will be able to make in our ongoing efforts to develop locally driven watershed management planning. But with pressure being brought upon local communities from the federal government and the state Department of Ecology, it's important that we work to ensure the local voices are heard and that local property rights are not eroded.

OUR OBJECTIVES ARE THREEFOLD:

- Provide a reliable and abundant water supply while protecting existing water rights;
- provide a clean water supply;
- and provide a sound economic base for our rural communities, while protecting our hydroelectric dams

With the volatility in the energy market this winter, it should be clear to everyone that discussion of breaching our hydroelectric dams is not a well thought out idea. Even the Seattle City Council, which passed a resolution supporting the breaching of the lower Snake River dams, had to back track when the city's utility proposed doubling its purchase of hydroelectric power from BPA. The president of the council later wrote a letter to admit the resolution was inappropriate.

Recognition of our interdependence in rural and urban Washington is the spirit in which we can make progress on natural resource issues during this upcoming legislative session.



Rep. Bruce Chandler gives testimony on legislation during a House committee meeting.

OUR STATE NEEDS NEW SOURCES OF ENERGY

The rising cost of energy threatens people's jobs as manufacturers are forced to scale back. Businesses have felt the effects, and now households are too, as the enormous surcharges imposed by local utilities statewide are showing up on home energy bills.

Our regional power system has served us well for many years. Unfortunately, Washington has not made a major commitment toward new electricity generation since the 1970s. Meantime, demand for electricity has steadily risen.

We plan to continue working on proposals for tax incentives that will encourage companies to build power plants in our state, and/or upgrade their facilities to produce more energy. We also need to clear a regulatory path that will encourage new generation facilities to be developed to meet demands for reliable, affordable energy in our state. Consumers and businesses can also help by volunteering to conserve more energy until we can safely meet the demand.



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SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOLS

In recent years, the Legislature has set higher standards for our schools and greater expectations from our students. In many cases, those expectations have proven fruitful, with improved test scores and performance. Some schools, however, still need help.

We believe its important to provide teachers the tools necessary for them to do their jobs. That includes ensuring available dollars reach the classroom level while providing greater accountability for our students. In addition, school districts having difficulty meeting our greater expectations should get the help they need to bring them up to the standards we expect. It also means providing schools that are safe and keeping quality teachers in the classrooms.

We must remain watchful to ensure that the Washington Assessment of Student Learning exams and certification projects for high-school seniors serve as appropriate standards and accurate measures of performance.



Our goal is clear: Quality schools, quality teachers and a quality education that will prepare every student to meet the demands of the 21st century. We hope to reach these standards by giving teachers the tools to improve learning, and giving parents greater control over their children's education by providing choice and accountability.

KEEP IN TOUCH



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BARB LISK AND
BRUCE CHANDLER

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